Forest Insect & Disease Management

Survey Report

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FOREST TENT CATERPILLAR DEFOLIATION OTTAWA NATIONAL FOREST, MICHIGAN, 1975

Arthur R. Hastings, Entomologist
St. Paul Field Office

INTRODUCTION

An outbreak of forest tent caterpillar (Malacosoma disstria Hbn.) was reported by Ottawa National Forest staff in areas around White Pine and Ontonagon, Michigan in early June 1975. The forest tent caterpillar has not been a problem in the Upper Peninsula since the 1948-1952 outbreak when about one million acres were defoliated. More recently, in 1968, scattered pockets of light to moderate defoliation were reported.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the survey was to determine the location and acreage of forest tent caterpillar defoliation in the vicinity of the Ottawa National Forest.

METHOD

An aerial sketch-mapping survey was made on June 19, 1975, from approximately 1,500 feet above ground. Bruce Anderson, FI&DM technician, and Marion True, Ottawa National Forest, were observer and navigator, respectively. The area of infestation appeared to be severely defoliated with less than 25% of the crowns remaining. Areas of lesser amounts of defoliation were not discernible.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The gross outbreak area covers about 69,000 acres in two large areas. The larger area along the northern boundary of the Forest includes about 56,000 acres, of which approximately 39,000 acres are within the National Forest boundary. The second area of defoliation, near Ontonagon, is north of the National Forest boundary and extends over 13,000 acres.

This is the first year of the current forest tent caterpillar outbreak in Upper Michigan. Tree or branch mortality seldom occurs from one defoliation. Growth reduction from a single severe defoliation is likely to occur. Large numbers of caterpillars can be a nuisance to people in the area of outbreak.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Forest personnel should report defoliation or presence of the forest tent caterpillar in other areas.

2. FI&DM personnel will conduct an egg mass survey in October 1975 to forecast problem areas for 1976.

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